

MINUTES

MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES 58th LEGISLATURE - REGULAR SESSION

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Call to Order: By **VICE-CHAIRMAN MARK NOENNIG**, on March 12, 2003
at 3:00 P.M., in Room 172 Capitol.

ROLL CALL

Members Present:

Rep. Bill Thomas, Chairman (R)
Rep. Arlene Becker, Vice Chairman (D)
Rep. Mark Noennig, Vice Chairman (R)
Rep. Tom Facey (D)
Rep. Steven Gallus (D)
Rep. Ray Hawk (R)
Rep. Daniel S. Hurwitz (R)
Rep. Larry Jent (D)
Rep. Penny Morgan (R)
Rep. Holly Raser (D)
Rep. Don Roberts (R)
Rep. Ron Stoker (R)
Rep. Jonathan Windy Boy (D)

Members Excused: None.

Members Absent: None.

Staff Present: Susan Fox, Legislative Branch
CJ Johnson, Committee Secretary

Please Note. These are summary minutes. Testimony and discussion are paraphrased and condensed. The time stamp for minutes appears at the end of the content it refers to.

Committee Business Summary:

Hearing & Date Posted: SB 111, 3/5/2003
Executive Action: None

HEARING ON SB 111

Sponsor: SEN. LINDA NELSON, SD 49, Medicine Lake, Montana

Opening Statement by Sponsor:

SEN. NELSON opened the hearing on SB 111 by stating to the Committee that this bill will expand Montana Comprehensive Health Association's (MCHA) eligibility to include individuals whose current premiums are equal to or greater than 150 percent of a healthy person's premium for a similar plan. This insurance is the insurance of "the last resort."

EXHIBIT (huh52a01)

{Tape: 1; Side: A; Approx. Time Counter: 0 - 6.5}

Proponents' Testimony:

Aidan Myhre, Montana Comprehensive Health Association, rose in support of SB 111. She stated that this is a public program in partnership with private insurance companies. **Ms. Myhre** continued to speak about and explain MCHA provisions, the membership, eligibility requirements, rates and the funding process for this service.

EXHIBIT (huh52a02)

EXHIBIT (huh52a03)

EXHIBIT (huh52a04)

{Tape: 1; Side: A; Approx. Time Counter: 6.5 - 8}

Claudia Clifford, State of Montana, Insurance Commissioner's Office, spoke in support of SB 111, and explained to the Committee the collaboration between her office and MCHA. She reiterated that this insurance is the "insurance of last resort." **Ms. Clifford** spoke of the risk-sharing mechanism. An amendment is being proposed regarding a new federal act called the Trade Adjustment Act (TAA); this act deals with displaced workers and among other provisions, their insurance needs.

{Tape: 1; Side: A; Approx. Time Counter: 8 - 10.7}

Tanya Ask, Montana Comprehensive Health Association, spoke in support of SB 111, and the amendments proposed.

{Tape: 1; Side: A; Approx. Time Counter: 10.7 - 11.9}

Gordie Higgins, State of Montana, Department of Labor and Industry, rose in support of SB 111, particularly the amendments proposed by Ms. Clifford. Mr. Higgins referenced the TAA as it related to a lumber mill in Libby that has displaced workers and health insurance difficulties.

{Tape: 1; Side: A; Approx. Time Counter: 11.9 - 13}

REP. EILEEN CARNEY, HD 82, Libby, Montana, spoke in favor of SB 111, especially the amendments that relate to the TAA.

{Tape: 1; Side: A; Approx. Time Counter: 13 - 14}

Jerry Driscoll, AFL-CIO, spoke in support of the bill and the amendment. With the TAA, workers in Libby can get health insurance through the MCHA.

{Tape: 1; Side: A; Approx. Time Counter: 14 - 15}

Jani McCall, Deaconess Billings Clinic, Self, rose in support of SB 111. Ms. McCall related to the Committee her own personal story and her membership in the MCHA.

{Tape: 1; Side: A; Approx. Time Counter: 15 - 17}

Sami Butler, Montana Nurses Association, spoke in support of SB 111, and stated that this is another mechanism to cover those who are unable to receive insurance coverage elsewhere.

{Tape: 1; Side: A; Approx. Time Counter: 17 - 20}

Opponents' Testimony: None

Informational Testimony: None

Questions from Committee Members and Responses:

REPS. JENT, MORGAN, ROBERTS, HURWITZ, STOKER, NOENNIG, WINDY-BOY, and **FACEY** extensively questioned the sponsor, Ms. Ask, Ms. Myhre, Ms. Clifford, and Mr. Higgins, about the total health care costs in the state of Montana. They wanted to know how much is collected and what is paid by insurance, charity, and the amount "written-off" by companies. The witnesses were also questioned about the proposed amendments, the displaced workers, pooled programs, why any insurance company would be interested in joining the "pool", and finally why Blue Cross/Blue Shield is in favor of this program.

{Tape: 1; Side: A; Approx. Time Counter: 20 - 30}

{Tape: 1; Side: B; Approx. Time Counter: 0 - 15}

Closing by Sponsor:

SEN. NELSON closed the hearing on SB 111, and stated to the Committee that this bill will not cost the General Fund anything.

{Tape: 1; Side: B; Approx. Time Counter: 15 - 16}

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment: 4:00 P.M.

REP. BILL THOMAS, Chairman

CJ JOHNSON, Secretary

BT/CJ

EXHIBIT (huh52aad)